

◀Part-Time Faculty▶

The crisis in higher education

- There is a crisis in the American workforce today—the overuse and exploitation of contingent labor. An estimated 2.4 million workers are contingent, with a median income 34 percent less than that of permanent employees.
- This trend is dramatically evident in higher education, where the proportion of full-time tenured faculty in our colleges and universities has declined significantly, replaced by steadily increasing numbers of part-time (adjunct) and non-tenure track faculty over the past 30 years. Nationally, adjunct faculty ranks increased by 133 percent between 1971 and 1986, while full-time faculty numbers rose by only 22 percent.
- In the California Community Colleges, there are an estimated 37,000 adjuncts, compared to 17,000 full-time instructors. Despite a state law mandating that districts reach a goal that 75 percent of their faculty loads be taught by full-time faculty, the average is 62 percent.

Who are adjunct faculty members?

- Some adjuncts are career community college instructors—“freeway flyers”—cobbling together a living by teaching in multiple districts. Some faculty need to work in more than one district to make a living, due to a law that limits non-tenured faculty to no more than 60 percent of a full-time load. In a recent survey in Los Angeles, 55 percent of 600 respondents (one-quarter of the district’s part-timers) said they would like to have a full-time job in a community college.
- Some part-timers have full-time jobs elsewhere, are self-employed, have retired, or prefer to work part-time.
- Adjuncts teach credit and noncredit courses in academic and vocational fields. Adjuncts hold the same qualifications and degrees

required of full-time tenure-track faculty and are evaluated regularly.

How are adjuncts exploited?

- Adjunct faculty do not have contracts or tenure. Even faculty who have worked in districts for years are considered “temporary” employees, with no guarantee of continued employment. This precarious status impacts an adjunct’s academic freedom and makes many afraid to object to unfair conditions.
- On average, adjuncts receive 50 to 60 percent of the compensation that full-time faculty receive for doing equivalent work, according to a 2001 study by the California Postsecondary Education Commission. In many districts, adjuncts are not paid to confer with students outside of class, yet are expected to do so.
- Paid medical benefits are a distant dream for most part-time faculty. Only about one-third of the state’s community college districts offer health benefits to adjuncts, with varying levels of compensation and range of plans.
- Despite being dedicated and qualified professionals, adjunct faculty are marginalized, without a voice in decisionmaking. Those who want to be involved in their colleges attend departmental and Academic Senate meetings, participate in college governance, and develop curriculum—most often without pay.

How do students and colleges suffer?

- Part-time instructors are not readily available on campus to accommodate students who wish to see them during their limited office hours. Many colleges do not provide adjuncts with office space to meet with students. Often the only storage facilities they have are the trunks of their cars.
- The overuse of part-time faculty has created a situation in which the burden of

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committee work and shared governance falls on the shoulders of a handful of full-time instructors. Some departments operate with no full-time faculty. The erosion in the core of tenured faculty available to provide these services undermines the long-term quality of the institutions.

How did we get here?

- In the 1950s and 1960s, part-timers comprised about 12 to 15 percent of faculty and were used as specialists in vocational fields. In the 1970s, funding cutbacks, combined with enrollment growth, led colleges to increasingly rely on cheap part-time labor.
- Concern about the large numbers of adjuncts and their working conditions resulted in the passage of AB 1725 in 1988, an attempt to place limits on the number of part-time instructors. However, districts have failed to reach the intended 75:25 ratio of full-time to part-time instruction.
- In 1999, breakthrough legislation, AB 420, expanded eligibility for health insurance and paid office hours and set the stage in 2001 for state funding allowing districts to increase compensation, office hour pay, and health benefits for adjuncts. All of these advances have to be bargained locally, with varying levels of success.
- Through the years, piecemeal legislative advances have improved conditions, giving adjuncts access to unemployment insurance and an improvement in retirement benefits. These have provided some advances but have not remedied the most serious inequities.
- Although there can be good reasons to employ adjunct faculty—to supplement the regular program, fill in for the temporary loss of a full-time instructor, meet the temporary needs of enrollment increases, or utilize the expertise of a specialist—it is clear that these are not the reasons that tremendous numbers of part-time faculty are being employed.

What are the issues of adjuncts?

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK Adjuncts deserve proportional compensation (pro rata pay) for teaching, preparation, grading, and meeting with students. If adjuncts participate in college activities (shared governance, committees, department meetings, and other non-teaching activities), they should be paid for that service. Part-time faculty need access to office space to meet with students.

JOB SECURITY Adjuncts deserve the security of knowing whether they will be employed from one semester to the next, including rehire rights, with priority based on seniority and satisfactory evaluations. Adjuncts should be informed of assignments well before the beginning of a semester, and listed by name in the schedule, not designated as “staff.”

MEDICAL BENEFITS Adjuncts deserve full health coverage when teaching a 50 percent load or more and having achieved a designated seniority. Coverage should continue between semesters. Adjuncts should have access to the same plans offered full-time faculty. Premium costs should be pro-rated when adjunct loads are below 50 percent.

MORE FULL-TIME JOBS When an agreed-upon percentage of courses in a department are filled by adjuncts for more than two consecutive years, they should be converted into full-time positions. Adjuncts who have been teaching in the district should be granted priority for interviews. Having more full-time tenure track teachers is good for the profession, for colleges, and for students.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T Adjuncts deserve to be an integral part of college communities. As dedicated faculty with the same degrees and qualifications as full-time instructors, adjuncts should be encouraged to participate in decisionmaking, such as voting for department chairs and shared governance—and be paid for this work. Part-time faculty should have the same rights that full-time faculty have, including the freedom to choose textbooks.

What does the CFT Part-Time Faculty Committee do?

- Promotes involvement in the AFT, CFT, and local unions to push for improvements for adjuncts in contract negotiations.
- Lobbies state legislators to provide more resources for our colleges and to remedy inequities for part-time faculty.
- Educates part-time and full-time faculty, students, and the public about the benefits of changing the current two-tiered system.
- Collaborates with other organizations, statewide and nationwide, to promote the interests of contingent employees.

To learn more about part-time issues and the Part-Time Faculty Committee

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